THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) One company has been granted licence for providing National Long Distance Telephone Service in the country and two companies have been issued Letter of Intent for signing of National Long Distance Service licence.

(b) to (d) One application received from Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) National Long Distance Service Licence is under consideration.

Sankhya Vahini Project

1846. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sankhya Vahini Project is facing closure in the wake of Carnegie Mellon University of US withdrawing from the project;

(b) if so, whether the reasons adduced by the Carnegie Mellon University for withdrawal from the joint project are red-tapism and m-ordinate delay;

(c) what are the reasons for bureaucratic bungling and inaction in such sensitive areas involving overseas collaborators; and

(d) whether Government would ensure that such technology-oriented projects are divested from bureaucratic dominance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Sankhya Vahini Project has been shelved in the wake of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) of US withdrawing from the project. According to the CMU, there was delay in launching the project and in disposal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the proposed joint venture in the Delhi High Court.

(c) and (d) There was no bureaucratic bungling or ination. The delay was mainly due to the Public Interest Litigation in Delhi High Court against the project. Further, with the formation of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in October, 2000, the joint venture agreement was required to be renegotiated and fresh approval of the

competent authorities obtained. The Government does not approve of bureaucratic dominance and is committed to clear and implement new projects in a time-bound manner.

Internet Telephony

1847. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to provide the benefits of Internet Telephony to the customers from April 1, 2002;

(b) if so, how many customers would be benefited; and

(c) out of which, how many customers in Karnataka would be benefited?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) With opening of Internet Telephony, the customers are likely to be benefited with the availability of a cheaper option with less quality of voice transmission, for the long distance call. It is difficult to quantify the number of customers that would be benefited, at this point of time.

Reliance plan to destroy VSNL

1848. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI:
SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem captioned 'how reliance plans to destroy VSNL with libralisation of telecom' as appeared in the Asian Age, New Delhi dated the 27th April, 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government and CBI have initiated an inquiry into sharp upward movement in the entire dealing occurred by onc Vice-President based at Mumbai of Reliance telecom; and

(d) if so, the findings thereof?